

LAND USE AND ZONING CONFLICTS

Lutherville has several distinct "neighborhoods", Historic Lutherville, Country Club Park, School Lane, Burton Avenue and the neighborhood south of Seminary Avenue. These are all long settled and largely built out residential neighborhoods. Recognizing that a change of character would result if the Historic District were built out to DR-3.5 zoning, the residents supported downzoning some of the community to DR-2 during the 1988 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process. However, there is still considerable development pressure on undeveloped or under utilized parcels.

A major concern to the residents of Lutherville is the prospect of Seminary Avenue changing, over time, to resemble York Road or East Joppa Road, with strip commercial uses and multiple traffic access points. The concern is based upon a pattern of spot rezoning to higher intensity uses along Seminary Avenue, Bellona Avenue and Ridgely Road. Roundtop Apartments, the DR 16 zone on the north side of Seminary Avenue just east of I-83, represented the first intrusion of higher density residential uses along Seminary Avenue. While this development presented little disruption to the quiet historic community, it set a precedent for the addition of similar uses along a narrow tree-lined roadway poorly suited to accommodate a proliferation of traffic access points. By contrast the Business Roadside Zone south of Seminary Avenue along the railroad tracks and the O-R-1 zone adjacent to it were serious intrusions, located deep within the neighborhood, more than a quarter of a mile from I-83 and nearly three quarters of a mile from York Road. Along Bellona Avenue as it approaches the Beltway, non-residential zoning is appropriate, but the current zoning BR (Business Roadside) is too intensive for this location on the Beltway ramp. Commercial and office zoning along Ridgely Road and York Road needs to be contained; the homes on Seminary Road closest to York Road are being used for offices despite residential zoning.

Although RO (Residential Office) zoning on the south side of Ridgely Road at Kurtz Avenue is intended to function as a buffer between commercial uses to the north and residential uses to the south of Ridgely, requests for higher intensity non-residential zoning south of the RO zone suggest that there has been a misinterpretation of this zone as the initial phase of non-residential zoning of this northern part of Lutherville. No further expansion of non-residential uses should be permitted.

Lutherville is not alone in its struggle to protect the residential character of the community from commercial encroachment. To help established communities, several new zoning zones have recently been created. A community conservation overlay zone might be created for Lutherville which would restrict certain uses currently allowed in the underlying existing zoning zones. Alternately, the new CB (Community Business) or BLR (Business Local Restricted) zones may be appropriate. These options need to be explored to determine what to request during the next Comprehensive Zoning.

The current zoning is shown in Map 2. Appendix B provides a brief description of the various zoning classifications, including a chart summarizing the new CB and BLR zones.

In addition to commercial zoning problems, the community also has concerns about several other types of developments. Many existing residential lots are still large enough to permit subdivision. Panhandle lots create awkward relationships and should be discouraged.

College Manor occupies a very large site and includes another parcel on the SE corner of

Seminary and Francke Avenues. Some expansion of the nursing home or a related residential development would be appropriate. Traffic design compatibility and retention of some open space will be of concern.

The community is concerned about an increase in crime in the Ridgely Road area. LCA should continue to work with the MTA and the County police to improve security.

Goal: To protect Lutherville's residential character by deterring any further expansion of non-residential uses.

Action 1: Work with Baltimore County and non-residential business/property owners to refine Lutherville's zoning during the next Comprehensive Zoning Map Process (beginning August 1, 1995). Lutherville's existing residential zoning pattern should be retained (DR 2, 3.5 or 5.5). No further encroachment of commercial, office or light industrial uses within these traditionally residential areas should be allowed.

The BR and BL commercial zones near the railroad tracks should be changed to the new CB (Community Business) zone if business/property owner support can be obtained. Language was added when this zone was adopted to prevent its application to already developed commercial areas. This prohibition should be removed if it is to be useful in protecting established neighborhoods such as Lutherville. If this prohibition can not be changed, the LCA should work with the County to define how a community conservation overlay zone could be designed specifically for Lutherville. Certain intensive uses which are permitted in the BR and BL zones should be prohibited. The only reason for commercial zoning at these sites was the existence of a few scattered commercial uses predating zoning. The intent is to recognize existing commercial uses, but to take a definite stand against any expansion or intensification of commercial use within the residential community. Similar treatment of the BL zoned land on Seminary just west of York Road should also be considered. The LCA should request zoning enforcement to prevent adjacent homes being used for offices.

The offices on Bellona Avenue at the Beltway ramp should be changed from BR to O-3. Access is very restricted and retail uses permitted in the BR zone would cause major traffic problems on the Beltway ramp.

The LCA and property owners will need to reach agreement on appropriate zoning modifications, and they are to be included in the 1996 Comprehensive Zoning Map Process.

Action 2: Work with MTA and local elected officials to insure that light rail operations and parking facilities are planned so there is no intensification of non-residential activity. Continue to work with the MTA and County police to improve the security plan for the existing Lutherville Light Rail station.

Action 3: Work with the owner of College Manor to ensure that any development plans would be for a nursing home/life care facility or single family homes that would be compatible with the design of the existing building and adjacent residences. Re-zoning for office, retail or apartment use would generate too much traffic and adversely impact the community. Due to noise and traffic, the corner of Seminary and Front Avenues should ideally become a park.

Action 4: Develop guidelines for new in-fill residential development to ensure it is compatible with the fabric of the surrounding neighborhood. (See draft guidelines in Appendix E).

TRAFFIC CIRCULATION PATTERNS

Traffic is choking Lutherville's residential neighborhoods. The residents of Country Club Park have difficulty getting out of their neighborhood onto Seminary Avenue. The residents of the historic district have so much cut-through traffic that it is difficult for them to safely walk around their neighborhood.

Even though Lutherville has been nearly completely built-out for over thirty years, the amount of traffic cutting through the community has continued to increase dramatically each year. The County has approved extensive residential development along Seminary Avenue west of I-83 without planning appropriate commercial services such as a grocery store or pharmacy. Riderwood and Ruxton are also underserved. This is turning the historic district into a highway. Seminary Avenue has experienced a volume increase of approximately 80% just within the past 5 years. It is likely that 75 - 80% of the traffic on Francke and Kurtz Avenues is short-cutting between Ridgely and Seminary Avenue. Seminary, Bellona, Front, Kurtz, Francke, Lincoln and Clark Avenues are currently experiencing excessive through traffic. The intersection of Francke, Kurtz and Ridgely is very congested and confusing because of the irregular configuration. Every effort should be made to redirect non-local traffic around Lutherville via arterial roads (695, I-83, and York Roads).

The existing Lutherville Light Rail station has become a transit hub, greatly increasing bus traffic as well as automobile traffic in the area. New or expanded Light Rail stations near or in the Lutherville Community Conservation area have the potential to add a traffic burden to currently over-used neighborhood streets. LCA will work with the MTA to minimize the traffic impact of any new or expanded Light Rail station. MTA should be encouraged to provide a traffic analysis for any new or expanded Light Rail Station in conjunction with the development process.

While through-trucks over 3/4 ton are not allowed on Charles Street south of the Baltimore City line, no such prohibition exists on the County portion of Charles Street nor on Seminary and Bellona Avenues. A prohibition against trucks does exist on Front, Francke and Kurtz Avenues, but is not uniformly enforced. Vibration damage from increasing truck traffic threatens many of the historic structures in Lutherville.

Despite heavy traffic, there are few sidewalks in the area. In the past, there were asphalt walkways in the historic part of Lutherville, but most of these have deteriorated with time and are now overgrown with grass. It is therefore difficult for residents and visitors to the historic district to walk around the immediate neighborhood and to access community parks, stores, and churches. With the 1993 reopening of the Lutherville Elementary School, pedestrian safety and the need for sidewalks has become more pressing. Many neighborhood children live close enough to walk, but must be bused due to the lack of sidewalks. A well-planned system of asphalt sidewalks could be financed with the savings from reduced busing costs and would greatly enhance the community.

Finally, as traffic on I-83 continues to grow the noise levels are rising for adjacent Country Club Park homes. Sound barriers would reduce noise and increase privacy and security. This area meets SHA standards for receiving noise mitigation, but unfortunately, the SHA has a long list of communities requesting noise barriers.

- Goal:** To protect residential neighborhoods and the historic district from encroachment of higher intensity activities requires a long range commitment to minimizing through traffic.
- Action 1:** Work with owner of the Timonium Mall to reduce cut-through traffic between Ridgely Road and Aylesbury.
- Action 2:** Work with the County and State to adopt a traffic mitigation plan to reduce the use of Lutherville's roadways for non-local travel, specifically between Falls Road and York Road and Seminary Avenue and Ridgely Roads, as well as between the Beltway and York Road. LCA will undertake origin and destination studies for traffic using these routes to verify the amount of non-local traffic. Identify measures for diverting through traffic to arterial roads outside the residential community. A series of alternatives are presented in the draft traffic mitigation plan in Appendix D. After the traffic mitigation plan is refined, the LCA will meet to select preferred alternatives for testing.
- Action 3:** Any future widening of Seminary and Bellona Avenues should be limited to intersection-related improvements to preserve the tree-lined historic character of Lutherville, to provide pedestrian access and to discourage use of these roads as alternatives to the Beltway, Joppa Road, Timonium Road or York Road.
- Action 4:** Monitor speeds and traffic volumes on local neighborhood streets. If excessive, the LCA and the Bureau of Highways and Traffic Engineering should identify the best means to alleviate the problem. This would apply immediately to Front, Kurtz, and Francke Avenues, and perhaps Clark to Lincoln Avenues as well. Consideration should be given to making some of these streets one way, with bike lanes and pedestrian walkways. Testing of alternatives may be the best way to achieve consensus on the preferred solution.
- Action 5:** Retain speed limits at a maximum of 25 mph. Study the possibility of restricting through-trucks over 3/4 ton capacity on Charles Street, Seminary and Bellona Avenues. Work with the Police Department to enforce. Also work with the police to enforce stop sign violations.
- Action 6:** Continue to improve the sight lines at Seminary and Greenspring so that residents of Country Club Park can safely access Seminary Avenue. Retest periodically for signal warrant at Seminary and Greenspring.
- Action 7:** Develop a system of asphalt paths throughout the community to connect the Lutherville Elementary School, parks, churches, and commercial areas. The heavily used dirt path linking Country Club Park to Ridgely Road shopping is very muddy adjacent to Roland Run. Consideration should be given to installing an improved walkway, possibly with a footbridge over the stream.
- Action 8:** Urge the SHA to install noise barriers along I-83 adjacent to the 700 - 900 blocks of College and Morris Avenues, as well as Goucher at Spring Avenue.

ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

Streams and woods are important environmental features of Lutherville. Protecting these features and addressing flooding and water quality problems are key objectives.

Streams and Floodplains

There are two ridge lines within the community: one is located along Hilltop Road; the other is located in the Historic District east of College Manor. These hills are separated by Roland Run. A branch of this stream runs along the western edge of Country Club Park southward between School Lane and Burton Avenue.

The floodplains created by these streams have helped to define existing development within Lutherville, creating boundaries between neighborhoods built in different periods and styles. In many places north of Seminary Avenue, the width of the floodplain exceeds 200 feet, and south of Seminary, the floodplain spreads to as much as 600 feet wide (see Map 4). These streams, which provide natural buffers between neighborhoods, can also function as important open space connectors which serve to bring residents together via pathways linking the community.

Roland Run presents several challenges. Some improved properties experience flooding or the continuous threat of flooding. Development upstream that predates current stormwater management practices is partly responsible. Other factors include the under-sized roadway culverts and the relocation of some portions of the stream bed to accommodate past development. Culverts under Morris Avenue, Seminary Avenue and the Beltway have helped to shape the current floodplain, sometimes to the detriment of nearby properties.

In addition to flooding problems, increased runoff from development has caused stream channel erosion, leading to sedimentation, reduced water quality, and degradation of stream life. Fill and debris are encroaching on the streambanks in the commercial area south of Seminary Avenue.

Goal: To reduce flooding and improve water quality in the Roland Run tributaries.

- Action 1:** An engineering study undertaken by Purdum and Jeschke, funded by the Baltimore County Department of Public Works, identified the impact of the floodplain on improved properties. That study could be used as a starting point to refine the HUD/FEMA mapping in this area, and to address the complaints of flooding on Trevor Court.
- Action 2:** Baltimore County's Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM) should assess the possibility of constructing a storm water management facility that would provide quantity and quality control for run-off from adjacent commercial areas that have no stormwater management in conjunction with the Jones Falls Watershed Management Plan. A possible site for such a facility is the publicly owned land located at the northeast corner of Country Club Park. This should improve water quality in Roland Run and reduce streambank erosion.
- Action 3:** Streambank stabilization should be undertaken in places where erosion has occurred in conjunction with the Jones Falls Watershed Management Plan. Cleanup and/or reforestation of the stream buffer should be undertaken south of Seminary Avenue and may be appropriate in other areas. The community can provide support and seek assistance from the Boy Scouts, Save-Our-Streams, and other volunteer groups. A joint effort with the County Dept. of the Environmental Protection and Resource Management could produce significant improvements to stream ecology and aesthetics.

- Action 4:** The impact of the proposed "Towson/Beltway" Light Rail station on Roland Run would be negative for the community. Parts of this site are located within the floodplain and exhibit wetlands characteristics. The required facilities and associated large parking area could exacerbate upstream and downstream flooding and have an adverse water quality impact on Roland Run. LCA has serious concerns about construction within the 100 year flood plain.

Wooded Areas

The community is characterized by numerous wooded areas of several acres or more. The western, northern, and eastern boundaries of Country Club Park form a nearly continuous wooded buffer between the neighborhood and I-83 on the west, office and light industrial uses on the north, and the railroad on the east.

Goal: To preserve and enhance Lutherville's woodland and street trees.

- Action 1:** The LCA and DEPRM should undertake a program to plant additional trees and appropriate groundcovers adjacent to the Roland Run tributaries. DEPRM will evaluate appropriate locations and species of trees to be planted. This would help minimize erosion and would enhance the water quality in these tributaries.
- Action 2:** Almost all of the streets in the community including Seminary and Bellona Avenues are tree-lined. The LCA Greening Committee should continue working with the State Forest Conservancy District Board to regenerate and enhance the street tree population.
- Action 3:** Residents along the stream should be encouraged to utilize environmentally sound land use practices on their portions of the stream edge. DEPRM should undertake a public education program in conjunction with LCA.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Lutherville is fortunate to have some publicly owned parks and open spaces that should be protected (see Map 4). There are also some open space acquisition and enhancement possibilities.

Lutherville Elementary School and Seminary Park

These sites have served as major recreational areas in the community for many years. In the future there could be pressures for commercial redevelopment, a light rail station, or other high intensity uses. This type of redevelopment would damage the quality of life in two ways: the taking of recreational land and problems related to the new use (such as traffic and deterioration of the natural land features).

Goal: To protect and enhance these key recreational resources.

- Action 1:** Continue to use Seminary Park as a prime recreation site and discourage non-recreational uses such as Light Rail expansion.
- Action 2:** Improve pedestrian access to both recreation areas. Sidewalks or walkways are needed to provide safe access for children to the elementary school and access for all residents to the ballfield and fitness trail. A walking, jogging path along the Roland Run floodplain would improve access to Seminary Park for residents of Country Club Park, as well as those living east of the railroad tracks.
- Action 3:** Work with the County and Board of Education to further upgrade the playground facilities in conjunction with reopening Lutherville Elementary School. Consideration should be given to creating parallel or diagonal parking along Francke to accommodate sports events.
- Action 4:** The LCA should continue to work with the Dept. of Recreation and Parks to upgrade and maintain Seminary Park, especially the playground equipment.
- Action 5:** Since Lutherville residents utilize the Orchard Hills Park on Bellona Avenue, the LCA should support the Orchard Hills Community Association in ensuring this park is retained by the County for recreational use.

Passive Recreation and Natural Open Space

Passive recreation and natural open space is an important amenity in the community, particularly surrounding the Country Club Park neighborhood. As illustrated in Map 4, portions of this ring of wooded, natural open space around Country Club Park are already publicly owned, either as park land, drainage easements, or as floodplain.

Goal: To permanently protect natural buffer areas.

- Action 1:** The owners of floodplain or wooded land adjacent to Country Club Park should be encouraged to donate the land or conservation easements to the County. There are tax benefits from such donations. The LCA should identify the locations of undeveloped parcels that are candidates for additions to the community's open space system and approach the property owners about protecting these important natural areas.
- Action 2:** Encourage the County to purchase additional natural open space adjacent to the lands they

already own to further protect this natural neighborhood buffer. The LCA should evaluate underdeveloped parcels and identify acquisition priorities.

Roland Run Stream Park

The LCA and Baltimore County have in recent years created a playground and small stream park in the floodplain adjacent to Morris Avenue in Country Club Park. Some of the adjacent floodplain is publicly owned. Additional floodplain acquisition could create a stream park linking the Country Club Park neighborhood to Seminary Park. Paths, streambank restoration and planting would greatly enhance both the environmental and recreational value of the area. Roland Run is designated as a greenway in the County Master Plan. The Roland Run greenway concept involves constructing a trail along the stream and MTA right of way from Lake Roland to the Northern Central Railroad Trail in Ashland.

Goal: To create a Roland Run Stream Park.

Action 1: The LCA should work with the OPZ and Dept. of Recreational and Parks to evaluate environmental resources and land ownership in order to define greenway park alternatives for community discussion. If there is community support, work with the Dept. of Recreation and Parks to develop a master plan, cost estimates, and funding strategy for creation of this stream park within our neighborhood.

Action 2: Work with the Ruxton/Riderwood Community Association to determine whether there is land and support for creating a path within the Roland Run greenway. If so, plans for linking Lutherville portion of the greenway to these communities could be incorporated as a second phase after completion of Lutherville's stream park.

Victorian Park

The possibility exists to create a more formal Victorian park at the intersection of Seminary and Front Avenues that could be a focal point for the community.

Goal: To create a Victorian Park in the heart of Lutherville.

Action: The LCA should work with the owner of College Manor and the Department of Recreation and Parks to evaluate use and design possibilities, then to develop cost estimates and a funding strategy. This could be a public or a private park, depending on the concept and available resources.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION AND DESIGN QUALITY

Article X, Section 26-532 of the Baltimore County Code defines the following purpose for the establishment of historic preservation districts:

"In providing for the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of those structures and districts in the County of historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural merit, the following objectives are sought to be attained:

- 1) To safeguard the heritage of the County as embodied and reflected in such structures and districts;
- 2) To stabilize and improve property values in such districts and in the County generally;
- 3) To strengthen the economy of the County; and
- 4) To promote the use of historic districts and landmarks for the education, pleasure, and welfare of the residents of the County.

The Lutherville Historic District is a primary feature of the community, listed both as a National Historic District and as a Baltimore County Historic District (see Map 2). As such, preservation of this area is important, not only to the residents of Lutherville, but to residents of Baltimore County and the State. For this reason, and in light of the objectives stated in the County Code, special consideration must be given to the needs of Lutherville, as external forces continue to threaten the preservation of this valuable resource.

Private development of parcels, as well as County and State projects such as the light rail and road improvements all impact the character of the historic district and the community as a whole. The LCA should take an active role to ensure that development is of high quality within the entire community. There are well-established design standards for restoration and additions to historic structures. However, design guidelines are needed for new residential development. Most development will involve single "in-fill" lots, but there are a few parcels with significant development potential, most notably College Manor.

The appearance of existing businesses within and adjacent to Lutherville is also of concern. Finally, the entrance points or "gateways" to Lutherville are not very distinctive or inviting and should be enhanced.

Goal: To protect and enhance Lutherville's historic residential character.

- Action 1:** The LCA should take maximum advantage of Lutherville's National and County Historic District designations. Monitor the County's actions on zoning and development proposals to ensure the County preserves the community's historic character. Monitor Federal and State actions to ensure they comply with requirements to evaluate and minimize adverse impacts on historic districts and structures.
- Action 2:** The LCA should investigate whether there is interest among the residents of Lutherville's two historically African American neighborhoods in expanding the boundaries of the National and/or the County Historic Districts to incorporate the School Lane/Railroad Avenue neighborhood or the neighborhood surrounding the Edgewood United Methodist Church on Bellona Avenue.
- Action 3:** The Lutherville Advisory Committee (LAC), which advises the Baltimore County Landmarks Preservation Commission, should prepare design guidelines for new in-fill development within the County historic district. These should address compatibility with the neighborhood. Draft guidelines are proposed in Appendix E. The County's Offices of Planning and Community Conservation should be encouraged to use these guidelines to evaluate in-fill development in areas of Lutherville outside the historic district.
- Action 4:** The LCA should work with the County and State to develop a plan and funding strategy to replace modern street signs, streetlights, and other fixtures in the historic district with historically compatible fixtures. Funding for signs would be provided either by LCA or through grant application.
- Action 5:** The LCA should work with Bell Atlantic and BGE to develop a cost estimate and assess funding alternatives to determine the feasibility of undergrounding utilities in the historic district.

Goal: To enhance the appearance of the entire community.

- Action 1:** The LAC or a sub-committee of the LCA should encourage existing owners to upgrade the appearance of businesses within and adjacent to the community by adding landscaping; screening parking and loading areas; improving signage; and designing any building renovations to upgrade the existing appearance. Commercial design guidelines as proposed in Appendix F.
- Action 2:** LCA's zoning committee should monitor development proposals in the County's review process to ensure that adjacent commercial development provides adequate landscaping to screen service areas and buffer neighbors.
- Action 3:** The LCA should develop an annual award program to recognize "good neighbor" businesses for design enhancements (and community support).
- Action 4:** The LAC or a sub-committee of LCA should evaluate community entrance points and identify appropriate locations for signs and/or plantings to accent arrival in Lutherville. The LCA should work with property owners and the Lutherville Garden Club to develop planting and maintenance agreements.